(a) whether Government have formulated any alternative strategy to compensate the farmers of drought affected States and for their damaged crops, the loans taken for agricultural purposes as well as the interest on such loans;

(b) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefore;

(c) whether Central Government have formulated any welfare policy for farmers to salvage them as well as agricultural labourers of affected States from miserable condition; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTILAL BHURIA): (a) to (d) The Government is implementing the National Agricultural Insurance Scheme (NAIS) which provides for compulsory coverage of the farmers availing crop loan from the banking institution. Under NAIS, compenstion is paid to the insured farmers if the crop yield falls short of guaranteed yield. Pursuant to the announcement made by the Finance Minister on 18th June, 2004, banks have been advised to reschedule/restructure the debts of the distressed farmers in the calamity-affected areas. As a further releif measure, Banks have also been permitted to advance loans to the farmers who face acute distress becuase of the heavy burden of debt from the non-institutional lenders. Besides, financial assistance under National Calamity Contingency Fund (NCCF)/Calamity Relief fund (CRF) and foodgrains from the special component of Sampoorna Grameen Rozgar Yojana (SGRY) are provided to the farmers affected by natural calamities including drought. In order to protect the farmers from the adverse effect of market price fluctuations, the Government also announces Minimum Support Price (MSP) for the selected items of agriculture produce and undertakes their procurement operations.

Increase in support price of millet

†479. DR. PRABHA THAKUR: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(a) whether Government are contemplating to increase the support price of millet;

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(b) whether Government have given any direction to the Food Corporation of India regarding direct purchase of millet from farmers at the support price; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTILAL BHURIA): (a) The Government had announced the Price Policy for Kharif Crops of 2004-05 season, including millets, on 10th August, 2004. Minimum Support Prices (MSPs) for millets, namely, Bajra and Jowar have been fixed at Rs. 515 per qunital each compared to Rs. 505 per quintal each fixed for 2003-04 season.

(b) and (c) Procurement of coarse grains, including Bajra and Jowar, from farmers under price support operations is presently being entirely undertaken by the State Governments and their Agencies.

Suicides in Maharashtra

480. SHRI SANJAY NIRUPAM: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that so many farmers have committed suicide in Maharashtra recently in the month of January and February, 2005;

(b) if so, the details thereof, district-wise;

(c) whether Government have provided any incentives to their families; and

(d) if so, the details thereof and other requisite steps being taken by Government to check the farmers' suicide?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTILAL BHURIA): (a) to (d) Information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of House.

Revival of closed fertilizer units

†481. SHRI RAMADHAR KASHYAP: Will the Minister of CHEMICALS AND FERTILIZERS be pleased to state:

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.